
Government of the District of Columbia



**Office of the Deputy Mayor for
Public Safety and Justice**

Testimony of
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***Public Oversight Hearing on the “Government
Facilities Security Amendment Act of 2005,” Bill 16-388***

Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Phil Mendelson, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia

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Room 500
John A. Wilson Building
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Good morning Chairperson Mendelson and members of the Committee on the Judiciary. I am Edward Reiskin, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice. Mr. Chairperson, I would first like to thank you and the entire Committee for providing the Chief and I with the opportunity to again state the case for increasing public safety in the District of Columbia through the seamless delivery of citywide law enforcement and security services.

My testimony will outline the Mayor's reorganization plan for transferring the responsibility for security services in District government buildings from the Protective Services Division (PSD) of the Office of Property Management to the Office of Security Services of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD). Last week, the Mayor presented the plan for the Council's approval pursuant to the FY 2005 Budget Support Act, wherein the Council voted to approve the transfer subject to the plan's submission. Since Bill 16-388, the "Government Facilities Security Amendment Act of 2005," would effectively reverse this prior action of the Council in support of the transfer, the Administration is opposed to the bill under consideration today.

Before I address the specific benefits of consolidation to the security operations of the District this afternoon I would first like to revisit the circumstances that gave rise to the reorganization process. The District renewed its focus on security in and around government buildings after the tragedy of 9/11. To keep pace with the changing security environment, we believe that our emergency preparedness and security operations must constantly improve and evolve while maintaining the highest standards. To that end, over the past several years the District has made significant enhancements in its emergency preparedness, and is the only municipality to have received national accreditation for its emergency preparedness program.

The persistent threat of a terrorist strike has caused public agencies to employ reasonable strategies to control access, screen visitors for weapons, and monitor their facilities. The challenge is to do so in a manner that adheres to constitutional standards and still allow for citizens' access to public facilities. Likewise, our employees and their families must be reassured that their safety and security is paramount. Security personnel, by virtue of their posts in our government facilities, are likely to be first responders should there be an attack on the District government. As important, security personnel will play a critical role in ensuring continued government operations under such a scenario so that District employees can provide for the needs of residents, visitors, businesses, and others organizations in DC.

To achieve this new level of security, our experience with the hot spot model of focus and coordination led us to develop the concept for a new division within MPD that would house government building security, school security, and public housing security. Although the Council conditionally approved the PSD transfer last year, the subsequent passage of the School Safety and Security Contracting Procedures Act of 2004 transferring responsibility for school security to MPD compelled us to reprioritize. Given the deadlines associated with that legislation, we shifted gears to ensure the necessary

stakeholder involvement and planning for a transfer of management responsibility. The upside is that in preparing for the school security transfer we learned a lot, much of which helped us to shape the PSD transfer. As you will hear from Chief Ramsey, MPD is now in a position to leverage the success of the school security transfer in planning for and executing the PSD transition. Through the Department's Office of Security Services, MPD's experience managing the school security contract will enhance MPD's management of the city's contract for private security services at public buildings.

The PSD reorganization plan followed a comprehensive study by MPD of the role and function of PSD. Following the study, I assembled an interagency task force led by Assistant Chief Gerald Wilson that met regularly over a period of several months to develop transition plans for both the PSD and School Security transfers. The task force comprised District employees with diverse professional backgrounds, as well as representatives of the International Brotherhood of Police Officers Local 445, the union representing rank and file PSD members below the rank of sergeant, and representatives of all strata and assignment from within the PSD itself.

As you know, the Mayor and other members of the Administration have extolled the benefits of the PSD transfer to enhanced public safety in the District in numerous forums over the past year—these include: enhanced response through unity of command, enhanced professionalism through standardized training and protocols, improved access to and economized use of resources, and mission focus.

Placing separate law enforcement functions and security functions under a single chain of command will enable a more swift and coordinated response during an incident at one of the 88 sites currently protected by the PSD. Under the authority of the Chief of Police, security at government buildings will have the direct support of and access to 3,800 uniform officers and the host of other MPD resources that the Department brings to bear in protecting the city.

Part of our enhanced response capacity will be achieved through the improved use of communications technology. Many of the 88 separate sites at which the PSD currently controls the security function are equipped with video monitoring equipment and alarm systems. When integrated into MPD's Office of Security Services, security personnel will make use of video equipment and a seamless radio communication network for enhanced two-way communications with the MPD—facilitating the sharing of critical security information and better threat intelligence should a specific threat be directed at our employees or buildings. The District must increase its ability to protect public facilities and detect, assess, and respond to threatening situations at these locations.

Another aspect of enhanced response will be achieved through increased accountability. By bringing the PSD, like school security, under the MPD, the District is affixing responsibility and accountability for locally managed public safety and security services in one agency and a single chain of command. This consolidation makes sense not only in terms of the management of these law enforcement and security

services, but also in terms of the oversight of these critical functions by the Council and District residents. When there are issues or opportunities that cross functions, the public will know to whom to turn for answers and for results.

Bringing all of the District's law enforcement and security professionals under one organization enables the standardization of basic training under a single set of policies and procedures, which allow these professionals to work better together. Of course, different functions require some specialization in training. Still, there are many common elements of training for police officers, special police officers, and contract security staff—and standardized training will help the District manage risk and ensure police integrity. For example, the importance of training on how to de-escalate potentially violent episodes is critical. Not only does this ensure solid policing for all residents, it also protects the District from lawsuits due to the absence of the well developed and maintained skills in crisis management and less lethal force. For specialized training needs, MPD will integrate and develop best practice training and continuing education, such as it is currently doing for School Resource Officers, to ensure the specific needs of the PSD are fully understood by all personnel assigned to this specialty.

The PSD transfer will also bring about improved access to and economized use of resources for the District's law enforcement and security operations. MPD is a large purchaser of equipment, uniforms, vehicles and other supplies. MPD also has a full-service human resources division and a grants management function, both of which are geared towards law enforcement and security needs. These capacities will enable economies of scale for procurement, personnel, and other administrative functions. But the benefits are not just in one direction. Through the PSD's experience in the management of contract guard services, the MPD will gain important institutional knowledge to benefit its management of the school security contract and better control associated costs.

Finally, from the standpoint of how we organize and carry out government services, this consolidation makes sense. The Metropolitan Police Department is in the business of fighting crime and providing public safety services; that is its mission and its core competency. The core competency of the Office of Property Management is managing the real property assets of the District of Columbia. By transferring responsibility for public safety and security of District buildings to the MPD, the OPM will be in a stronger position to focus its energies and resources on its central mission of facilities management. In doing so, we will improve the operational performance of both the PSD and the OPM.

In closing, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony today on the transfer of the Protective Services Division from the Office of Property Management to the MPD. I am available for any questions that you may have.